

TREASURY DEPARTMENT  
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
RUPERT BLUE, SURGEON GENERAL

# VENEREAL DISEASE CONTROL ACTIVITIES

EDUCATIONAL AND MEDICAL CAMPAIGN OF THE  
DIVISION OF VENEREAL DISEASES DURING THE  
FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1919

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## VENEREAL DISEASE CONTROL ACTIVITIES.

### EDUCATIONAL AND MEDICAL CAMPAIGN OF THE DIVISION OF VENEREAL DISEASES DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1919.<sup>1</sup>

By CHARLES V. HERDLISKA, Acting Assistant Surgeon, United States Public Health Service.

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 1919, the Division of Venereal Diseases of the Public Health Service conducted a highly successful program for nation-wide control of venereal diseases. This campaign was conducted with physicians, dentists, druggists, nurses, medical and allied colleges, professional journals and advertising media throughout the country. This report gives some idea of one branch of the work that is being carried on by the Division of Venereal Diseases, as well as the methods which have been employed.

#### Physicians.

In order that physicians might be impressed with the seriousness of the problem of venereal diseases and realize their responsibility to the public in carrying out the control program by reporting such diseases coming to their attention, and also to give each physician an opportunity to secure a copy of the revised Manual of Treatment of the Venereal Diseases, a communication was sent to approximately 132,000 doctors in the United States.

This communication consisted of a letter, a bulletin (V. D. No. 35), "An Appeal to Physicians for Cooperation," and an agreement card. The letter asked for the cooperation of every physician in the control program, and promised a copy of the manual to each one who signed an agreement card. In the bulletin the physician's individual responsibility was pointed out, and it was made clear that the attitude of the medical profession as a whole would determine largely whether venereal diseases are to be brought under control.

Each physician was urged to sign and return the card whereby he agreed:

1. To report cases of venereal diseases in accordance with the laws and board of health regulations.
2. To secure prompt treatment for all venereal cases coming to his attention, either treating them himself or referring them to a clinic or physician known to be competent in the treatment of such cases.
3. Not to dispense medicines for venereal diseases except where they can not be obtained from a drug store; and not to recommend,

<sup>1</sup> Reprint from the Public Health Reports, vol. 34, No. 41, Oct. 10, 1919, pp. 2241-2247.

prescribe, or sell any proprietary remedy marketed for the self-treatment of venereal diseases.

4. To give every venereal disease patient a circular of instructions, a supply of which is to be furnished free of charge by the Public Health Service or the State Board of Health.

As a result of this letter, agreement cards and favorable replies have been received from 60,666 physicians, or nearly 50 per cent of the medical profession of the United States. It is felt that this response is very gratifying and that the ultimate cooperation of the entire medical profession is assured.

In accordance with the usual policy of the Service, the cards of agreement received were forwarded to the State boards of health with a list of the physicians to whom the letter was sent. Each State board was asked to communicate with the physicians who have not responded and to secure their cooperation. It was suggested to each State that a supply of the manuals be purchased for distribution to those physicians who signed agreement cards. At the close of the year, June 30, 1919, 35 States had responded by purchasing 71,300 copies of this manual. Physicians in States which have not bought copies of the manual are receiving them from the Service. A record of the number of physicians pledging their cooperation and of the manuals purchased by States is shown in the table.

#### Medical and Allied Schools, Colleges, and Universities.

In order that physicians may be better equipped to handle cases of venereal diseases scientifically, a plan was suggested by the Service to the medical and allied schools, colleges, and universities in the United States, having in view two objects:

1. To enlarge and improve courses in the diagnosis and treatment of venereal diseases so as to include laboratory and clinical facilities in colleges where these courses are being taught; and to have such courses introduced as major courses in colleges where they are not being taught, that the students in medical schools and colleges may be equipped to handle these diseases when they begin to practice.

2. To offer special courses covering short periods of time, which men who are now practicing can take in order to prepare themselves to handle these diseases according to the best scientific methods. This program applies primarily to medical schools and colleges. It is important, however, that all schools of dentistry, pharmacy, and other allied schools have adequate training in the pathology of venereal diseases.

Preliminary to presenting this program to the medical and allied schools of the country, conferences were held at the universities in Washington, D. C., including the professional schools of Georgetown, George Washington, and Howard Universities. These conferences included addresses on—

1. The sanitary attack upon venereal diseases;
2. The better teaching of venereal diseases in schools, clinics, and hospitals;

3. The place of venereal diseases in medical, dental, and pharmaceutical schools, in hospitals, clinics, and training schools for nurses;

4. The importance of a proper knowledge of venereal diseases, not only to physicians but also to dentists, druggists, and nurses, and to college physical directors.

Social-hygiene films were shown and resolutions were adopted.

Using the program of the conferences held in Georgetown and George Washington Universities as a suggested form to be followed by other schools, a letter was sent to approximately 350 schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and physical education in the United States. Favorable replies have been received from all. The Georgetown University School of Medicine has broadened the work of the hygiene department, extended its curriculum, and increased its clinic facilities. The George Washington University Medical School has appointed a special teacher for this field, and has made plans for extending its lecture and clinical work, the new arrangement to go into operation with the beginning of the new school year. Howard University, representing the colored medical, dental, and pharmaceutical schools of the country, is making similar plans.

A second letter is now being sent out for the purpose of securing as early as possible the establishment in rural communities of extension courses for the benefit of the physicians and dentists who can not leave their professional work to attend postgraduate or special courses in the fall, winter, or spring. The results of this plan are not yet apparent.

#### Nurses.

Special courses were given at Columbia University summer sessions to prepare public-health nurses for work in venereal-disease control.

V. D. Bulletin No. 40, "Lectures to Nurses," has been issued. In this bulletin there is discussed the history, social significance, and pathology of venereal diseases, and their prevalence as shown by statistics in the Army and Navy. This pamphlet has been sent to 42,471 student nurses and 1,509 training schools for nurses in 44 States. From nurses 424 requests for literature have been received.

Among the conventions of nurses at which the control program has been presented and the nurse's responsibility emphasized, are the following:

National League of Nursing.

Graduate Nurses' Association.

National Organizations of Public Health Nursing.

The State Graduate Nurses' Associations of Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maine, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia.

The Alameda County Nurses' Association, Piedmont, Calif.

The New York City Federation of Public Health Nurses.

Local Nurses and the Lincoln Hospital Alumnae in New York City.

**Druggists.**

The campaign to secure the cooperation of druggists was launched in the fall of 1918, following the campaign with the advertising media. The purpose of this plan was to eliminate the sale of nostrums for the self-treatment of venereal diseases, and the prescribing by druggists of remedies for the treatment of these diseases.

A letter, inclosing V. D. Bulletin No. 21, "An Appeal to All Retail Druggists," and an agreement card, was sent to the 48,500 druggists in the United States. In this appeal druggists were asked:

1. Not to prescribe or recommend any remedy for a venereal disease.
2. Not to purchase any proprietary remedy to be sold to the public for self-treatment of a venereal disease, and not to sell any such remedy after January 15, 1919.
3. To refill only such prescriptions for the treatment of venereal disease as were given originally to the customer by a reputable physician who is still in charge of the case.
4. To distribute literature furnished by the Surgeon General to persons asking, without a physician's prescription, for remedies customarily confined to the treatment of a venereal disease, and to direct such persons to a reputable physician, to an approved clinic, or to the State board of health.

As a result of this communication and of a second letter sent out in January, 28,226, or nearly 60 per cent, of the druggists have favorably responded by letter or by agreement card.

This campaign was referred to the State boards of health in April. Each State was sent a list of the druggists and the replies received. A supply of V. D. Bulletin No. 36, "Disease and Health," and of V. D. Bulletin No. 2, "Responsibility of Druggists to the Public Health," was also sent to each State to be distributed among the druggists who pledged their cooperation. The plan provided that a copy of the "Disease and Health" pamphlet should be given to each person asking for a venereal disease remedy without a doctor's prescription, and that every employee of a pharmacy should be given a copy of V. D. Bulletin No. 2 for his own information. Each State has been asked to continue the campaign until every druggist in the State has discontinued the prescribing and sale of proprietary remedies for venereal diseases.

The following table summarizes by States the campaign with physicians and druggists:

Report of campaign with physicians and druggists July 1, 1918, to June 30, 1919.

Name.	Agreement cards signed by—		Manuals purchased by State boards of health for distribution to physicians.	Pamphlets sent State boards of health for distribution to druggists.	
	Physicians.	Druggists.		V. D. No. 36.	V. D. No. 2
Total.....	60,666	28,226	71,303	809,598	132,831
Alabama.....	782	249	2,000	7,470	1,245
Arizona.....	171	63	250	1,890	315
Arkansas.....	917	457	1,000	13,710	2,285
California.....	2,555	554	4,100	16,620	2,770
Colorado.....	720	455	.....	13,650	2,275
Connecticut.....	594	334	1,300	10,020	1,670
Delaware.....	93	77	400	2,310	385
District of Columbia.....	380	96	800	2,880	480
Florida.....	440	231	500	6,930	1,155
Georgia.....	865	344	3,500	10,320	1,720
Idaho.....	197	180	200	5,400	900
Illinois.....	4,014	1,709	12,000	51,270	8,545
Indiana.....	1,503	979	5,000	29,370	4,895
Iowa.....	1,381	1,142	3,000	34,260	5,710
Kansas.....	1,076	742	3,000	22,260	3,710
Kentucky.....	1,071	395	.....	11,850	1,975
Louisiana.....	586	317	2,000	9,510	1,585
Maine.....	414	380	1,000	11,400	1,900
Maryland.....	732	239	.....	7,170	1,195
Massachusetts.....	2,473	1,222	1,000	36,660	6,110
Michigan.....	1,683	1,011	2,000	30,330	5,055
Minnesota.....	1,018	633	.....	18,990	3,165
Mississippi.....	643	299	1,800	8,970	1,495
Missouri.....	2,307	1,055	.....	31,650	5,275
Montana.....	229	231	500	6,930	1,155
Nebraska.....	773	607	.....	18,210	3,035
Nevada.....	62	29	.....	870	145
New Hampshire.....	237	261	.....	7,830	1,305
New Jersey.....	1,092	762	3,500	22,860	3,810
New Mexico.....	185	90	100	2,700	450
New York.....	4,488	2,594	.....	77,820	12,970
North Carolina.....	724	258	2,500	7,740	1,290
North Dakota.....	267	280	500	8,400	1,400
Ohio.....	2,557	827	2,000	24,810	4,135
Oklahoma.....	998	619	2,000	18,570	3,095
Oregon.....	457	284	750	8,520	1,420
Pennsylvania.....	4,051	1,439	.....	43,170	7,195
Rhode Island.....	276	192	.....	5,760	960
South Carolina.....	439	121	1,000	3,630	605
South Dakota.....	289	328	.....	9,840	1,640
Tennessee.....	1,197	282	.....	8,460	1,410
Texas.....	1,872	852	5,000	25,560	4,266
Utah.....	211	116	500	3,480	583
Vermont.....	268	142	100	4,260	710
Virginia.....	912	359	1,000	10,770	1,795
Washington.....	716	388	2,000	11,640	1,940
West Virginia.....	587	200	2,000	6,000	1,000
Wisconsin.....	1,071	749	3,000	22,470	3,745
Wyoming.....	93	53	.....	1,500	285
Miscellaneous.....	10,000	3,000	.....	52,818	6,701

Advertising Media.

In an effort to secure the elimination of advertisements of quack doctors and medical institutes in treating so-called private diseases, and of nostrums for the self-treatment of venereal disease, a letter was sent to the business managers of the 20,000 newspapers and magazines in the United States carrying advertising.

This letter was accompanied by V. D. Bulletin No. 12, "An Appeal to Advertising Media to Cooperate in the Fight Against Venereal Diseases," and an agreement card which each manager was asked to sign and return. Those signing the card agreed:

1. Not to print the advertisement of any doctor or medical institute offering to treat venereal diseases, either naming specific diseases or

using indirect terms, such as "private diseases," "lost manhood," "discharges," "diseases peculiar to men," etc.

2. Not to print the advertisement of any nostrum described as effective in the self-treatment of venereal diseases.

It was known before beginning this campaign that the great majority of the 20,000 periodicals were not carrying quack venereal-disease advertising, but as an educational measure and to inform them of the stand taken by the Service it was considered advisable to include all.

The agreement cards and newspaper clippings received showed that approximately 19,800, or 99 per cent of the 20,000 newspapers and magazines circularized were cooperating. A special letter was then sent to the 200 papers which were still carrying objectionable matter. As a result 60 of these papers have agreed to change their policy, leaving only 140 which are still carrying venereal-disease advertising of this character.

Many of the newspapers and magazines which have not carried quack venereal disease advertising for many years have said that they consider such advertising not only undesirable from the standpoint of a clean newspaper, but also injurious in its effects on the health of the communities they serve.

This campaign also has been referred to the State boards of health for completion.

#### **Medical, Dental, Pharmaceutical, and Allied Journals.**

A campaign has also been launched by circular letter with the medical and allied journals of the country, the purpose of which is to secure their cooperation in giving publicity to the program presented to the medical and allied colleges. There have been sent out 1,700 letters to these professional journals. It is too early to tabulate results, but the replies being received show great interest and enthusiastic cooperation in the program outlined.

#### **Dentists.**

A campaign with dentists was started in April by a conference held under the auspices of the National Capital Dental Society of the District of Columbia, at the George Washington Dental School. The purpose of this campaign is to secure the better instruction of dental students and practicing dentists in diseases of the mouth, especially syphilitic lesions of the mouth.

The letter to dental schools has already been mentioned. A letter inclosing an appeal and agreement card similar to those used for physicians and druggists has been prepared, and is now being sent out to the 45,000 dentists of the country.